10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

The bombwn is the second most important type in the Class II type of woods. It has an averge weight of 40 lbs. per cubic ft. and is generally yellowish grey in colour with darker streaks. The durability of the wood is quite long but it cannot stand exposures. It is generally used for making of furniture and joineries. 137 313

The rest of the woods have also got an widespread application in a variety of purposes e.g. house building, shipmaking, carriage and furniture making. But the amount exploited from the forests is not of significance.

The didu and garjan are the most important in the class III type of woods. The former is of readdishy greay or yellowish in colour and is very soft and light. As such it is widely used in the making of packing cases for tea specially. The garjan is of the greatest demand of the Andaman forest woods. It has an average weight of 45-56 lbs. per cubic foot and is moderately hard. It is reddish grey to reddish brown in colour and is of moderate duration and as such the wood cannot be used for railway sleepers unless treated. It is used for planking and wood-paving now-a-days.

Ywegyi, being not a durable and hard type of wood, is generally used for the making of inferior cabinets. The trees yield a yellow dye which is also of wide use. [314]

Besides these, there are a host of other forest woods such as the several species of bamboo, cane, thatching palms etc. (For the industries based on forest products, see the Chapter on Industry.)

Forest Working.

The exploitation of timber from the forest has been attempted since the formation of the penal colony in the islands. For the systematic working of the forest, a Forest Department was opened in the year 1883 and a saw mill at Chatham was established in 1915 with a monthly outturn of 100 tons. But this was closed and another saw mill was set up by the Burma Trading Company having a monthly output of 750 tons and a second mill, an American circular mill in Chatham in 1927 and another mill in the North Andaman in 1925. But fortunately the wanton destruction of the forests was not possible because of the limited convict labour, and the fear of working in the aborigine-infested areas. The elephants were proved to be uneconomical in the exploitation of forest and an attempt for replacing the elephants by skidder was made in 1930. But the latter one was found to be uneconomical compared to the elephant power and this resulted again in the engagement of elephant 313 [492]

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

313 492 power in the forests. The net revenue of the forests from 1869 amounted to Rs. 45,65,764 inclusive of a capital asset of Rs. 21,39,983.

313 The present day forest exploitation has to some extent been revitalised with the introduction of regenerating processes and use of disel engines for the trams carrying logs from the spot of exploitation to the jetty wherefrom it is carried down to Port Blair for sawing and finally exported to the mainland and London. The working of the forest in the Andamans and its preparation for marketing undergo a number of stages. After a proper survey, a spot of exploitation is selected where a forest camp is opened near the jetty with a sufficient strength of imported labourers from India. The forest camps are erected with local timber and the exploitation proceeds from the spot in the immediate neighbourhood of the jetty (exclusive of the mangrove forests) to the interior regions. Along with the expansion of the exploitation area, tram lines are laid down from the jetty onwards. The felling is done by chiselling the trunk of the trees and then it is pulled by a few elephants for breaking it down. This completes the felling of the tree and after properly cutting all the branches, the logs are carried by an elephant with the help of his trunk and are unloaded from the tram. Afterwards, it is taken to the jetty where 313 505 the logs are again unloaded and rafted in a tank-landing craft to make them ready for transportation to Chatham Island where it is shown into standard size (not always) and is exported to the markets. The transportation of the logs from the spot of exploitation to Port Blair is always done on water ways. The success in the transportation of the logs have been facilitated by the innumerable harbours and creeks making easy the passage of the boat into the interior parts of the islands and it is found that the average drag seldom exceeds a mile and at the same time exploitation requires some experience of local conditions and foresight, as the coastal areas are exposed to the open seas and advantage has to be taken of the different seasons of the year to work in different tracts.

313 433 The yield of merchantable timber is only 15 tons per acre. An assessment of the future potentialities of merchantable timber with the introduction of the present method of regeneration has been given by Sri Chengappa[1]. The sustained or perpetual yield of the forests is about 135,000 tons per year and according to him, with the introduction of the present method of regeneration, the yield per acre is expected to be as much as 75 tons per acre, a five fold increase of the present yield. The

[113] 1 Chengappa, B. S. — The Andaman forests and their development; Census of India, 1931, Volume XVII, Andaman & Nicobar Islands by A. K. Ghosh.